

Delivers Commencement Address to 350 Graduates from Its Ft. Lauderdale Campus

(Ft. Lauderdale, FL) On Saturday, June 12, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) was awarded an honorary Doctorate degree of Philosophy and Educational Leadership from Keiser University. He also gave the commencement address to 350 graduates of its Fort Lauderdale campus.

Please find below a copy of Hastings' remarks:

Let me begin by thanking Keiser University for inviting me here today. I am a longtime supporter of Keiser and am privileged to consider Belinda and Art Keiser dear friends.

I am consistently impressed by the institution they have created as well as the caliber of students who walk through its doors. I truly am honored to be in your company today.

I also want to take a moment to congratulate, not only the students, but also the parents, families, and loved ones who have helped you reach this moment.

A college degree is an incredible achievement, and you would not be here without the countless hours of hard work you have put into your schooling.

But also, remind yourselves of all of those individuals who provided the support, encouragement, and assistance to make this day possible.

It is the tradition for commencement speakers to impart advice, extol the merits of the graduates, and expound upon the myriad of possibilities that await you beyond these walls. Well, for those of you who know me, I am not one for tradition.

By virtue of the fact that you have chosen to attend this institution, it is clear that you are well aware of the benefits of higher education.

You long-ago decided to take the reins of your future, you realized that it is your sole responsibility to create opportunities for yourself, and you have been adequately prepared to seize the opportunities your education has provided.

Today, rather than weaving a fairytale of how your diploma will surely be a golden ticket to boundless prosperity, I am going to put a few more challenges on your plate.

The stark truth is we are living in uncertain times with an uncertain future.

It was only a short time ago that our economy was on the brink of collapse, the housing market in Florida continues to struggle, and unemployment remains near record highs.

While our economy appears to be rebounding, there is still concern that global economic pressures will impede our recovery.

And yet, as I have visited Keiser and spoken with countless students, I am always taken aback by the professional drive you share, your commitment to succeed, and your focused approach to professional development.

A few years ago, in the months before my mother passed, she spent much of her time hospitalized. Of the many medical professionals who cared for her, at least 8 of the nurses were Keiser graduates.

I can say then that I am well-acquainted with your talents and capabilities, so I will not stand here and wish you the future successes I am sure you will attain.

Instead, I challenge you to do more.

You have already been given the tools needed to advance in your professions of choice, so now, I urge you to look beyond the benefits that your education will provide to just you and your families.

I realize it may be impolite to discuss politics in a commencement address, but seeing as I already wish to do away with tradition, I will go ahead.

Whether it be in Washington, DC or South Florida, you can't ignore the toxic political dialogue.

The talking heads focus on the horse race and which side is right or wrong, winning or losing, rather than on how we can work together to improve the lives of our citizens.

Therefore, I challenge you to rise above the bitterness.

As the future leaders of our nation, I challenge you to take ownership of your community's future, both as it recovers from the current slump and as we encounter further challenges.

Statistics have consistently shown that higher education is not merely about personal improvement. A more educated community is a more prosperous community, not simply in the economic sense, but in the social as well.

As you make your way through the professional world, seek opportunities to help those around you as well.

Whether it is by mentoring a coworker, volunteering your time, or speaking out for what is just, reach outside your inner circle and use the lessons you have learned in the classroom to

improve the world around you.

Be proactive in shaping your communities. You do not need to be a politician or a CEO to change the world.

The changes and innovations that have had the greatest impact on our society were born out of the passion and dedication of those who pursued their goals despite the doubt and discouragement from otherwise seemingly rational critics.

I am reminded of a poem I heard recently entitled "Think." It begins:

Few things possess more Power than a Thought.

Because a Thought has a potential to become something significant.
To solve something meaningful.
And to inspire us to achieve great things.

What makes a Thought so powerful is that it can be created by anybody.
At anytime.
From anywhere.

That's why thinking should be encouraged and nurtured in all its forms.
No matter how small.
Or how impossibly grand.

Because wherever Thinking happens,

Big ideas follow.

Minds become enlightened.
Knowledge grows.
And people discover new ways to unlock their
Potential.

So start Thinking.

When boiled down to its essence, this is what an education is all about – the ability to harness the power of thought.

Learning teaches you to think critically of the world around you, to adapt to changing circumstances and conditions, to use your minds to create, to build, to teach, to explore.

Each and every one of you has the capacity to achieve anything within those limits which only you set for yourselves, so start thinking.

Nearly a generation ago, President Clinton said, in his first inaugural address, “There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.”

You are what is right with America, and never underestimate that of which you are capable.

You are the ones who can deliver a century of unprecedented advancements in business, medicine, and technology.

You are the ones who will bring us out of this recession. And you have the power to ensure we never go down this road again.

Graduation is not simply about you; it is also about what you will contribute when you head out

these doors.

So get to work. I wish you much success as you chart a path forward for yourself and help to rebuild this nation.

Thank you, and congratulations!

About Keiser University:

Keiser University is Florida's leading statewide provider of career-focused, post-secondary education and is regionally accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Keiser University serves approximately 18,000 students seeking associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in over 50 high demand degree programs at its 14 campuses and through its online, Graduate School and College of Golf divisions. Keiser University's educational reach extends globally through its international programs including the Latin Division and cooperative agreements in the Eastern European nation of Moldova, as well as the new campus in Shanghai, China. For more information on Keiser University, visit www.keiseruniversity.edu .

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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